

April 26, 2026 Homily
Fourth Sunday of Easter

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/042626.cfm>

In today's Gospel, Jesus identifies himself as the genuine shepherd of the people of Israel. Jesus is a Shepherd, tenderly connected to the sheep. He calls the sheep, and the sheep know his voice, and answer when their names are called. The image conveys trust, transparency and affection. And there is something very important about the sheep: They are not simply beings who depend on the pastor and obey his voice without thinking. They know enough to follow the voice of the true shepherd and to flee from false shepherds. They know whom to trust. The fact that the sheep "know" indicates that the shepherd is guiding people who think, discern, search, judge, identify and have knowledge. They are intelligent. Then, Jesus says to the people, "I am the gate." It means that Jesus is the right way into the sheepfold. The members of the flock know that Jesus is the leader and the way, the trustworthy one who lovingly leads his sheep into the fullness of human life.

Dear brothers and sisters: In today's Gospel, there is something that is emphasized over and over: The responsibility of each member of the sheep to know, recognize, and choose the right way to follow the only Good Shepherd. We do not know for sure how Jesus looks like. But we have the chance to know Him by what He says. So, the Scriptures are the most important way to know God. Every day, many voices speak to us, and many doors are open to us: Our responsibility is to look for the voice of the true Shepherd and to identify the door that leads us into the true fullness of life. The Scriptures and the teachings of the Church are the voice of our Good Shepherd. We don't follow an unknown God. We come to Church and try to live out our faith, because in some way or another, we hear the voice of Jesus. And we know in our hearts that His voice is real, trustworthy, and true. We know that Jesus' voice calls us to have a life to the fullest. Among the voices that call us to kill and hate one another, to think we are superior or inferior to others, to discriminate against others for reasons of gender, age, culture, race, or political ideas, Jesus, our Good Shepherd and the Gate, calls us to love one another as He has loved us.

The good shepherd is the gate whereby the sheep come in at night for protection, and go out during the safety of the day, to be nourished and strengthened. Jesus is the gate that leads to God. Do we want to get close to God? Do we want to know what

God thinks of you? Then look at Jesus. He is the gate, the one who grants us access to God. He is the way to God, the way to abundant life, the path to true freedom. God has not left us to fumble along, trying this way and that to God. Jesus is the means whereby we get to God. And the gate is always open. The Easter stories are all stories of Jesus appearing to his disciples, coming to them, revealing Himself to them, engaging, forgiving them. He is the OPEN way, the OPEN gate to God. Jesus is the gateway to God, and He is loving, compassionate, suffering, self-sacrificial. Even people like you and me, walk the way through Jesus, the Open Gate. We are not perfect, not the most loyal disciples. We are simply those who say that the Gate to God was lovingly open to us, and we entered it.

We took Jesus up on his gracious invitation. That gate is Jesus. He allows us to enter, and He calls us to act towards each other in the same way. We are to be OPEN GATES, in our family, in our Church, in our NATION. Whoever needs to get in must be welcomed, embraced, forgiven, and loved. Because we have been also welcomed, embraced, forgiven and loved. That is the Church, a community of people who are to be, OPEN GATES, so those who choose to follow Jesus, will be welcomed, embraced, forgiven and loved.

Universal Prayer

Sunday 26th April 2026

Fourth Sunday of Easter Good Shepherd Sunday

World Day of Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life

Celebrant: Sisters and brothers, as Jesus is revealed to us as the Gate of the sheepfold through whom we enter to receive the nourishment of his word and Eucharist, so we observe this World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

1. For Pope Leo, that with his heart set on Jesus, the Good Shepherd, he will be a true servant of all in the Church and an instrument of peace for all humanity.

We pray to the Lord.

2. For our Diocese and the Church throughout the world, that on this Vocations Sunday, we will pray that many young adults will hear the call of Jesus to follow him into the priesthood, diaconate or religious life.

We pray to the Lord.

3. For all who are united in Jesus Christ in the Church, that they may "pause, listen, and entrust yourselves," in the words of Pope Leo, to their vocation to priesthood, diaconate, religious life, educators of faith, parents and as Christ's faithful with "holiness and service."

We pray to the Lord.

4. For Pope Leo's prayer intention for April, for priests in crisis, that they will be accompanied by people who understand their need, and communities which give support with prayer.

We pray to the Lord.

5. For our world torn apart by so much violence, that in every place there will be men and women of wisdom who will walk the path of diplomacy with their hearts and minds set upon justice and peace.

We pray to the Lord.

6. For the departed bishops, priests, deacons and religious who have served in our Diocese along with Pope Francis whose first anniversary of his funeral is today.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Loving Shepherd of your Church, hold us all in your tender embrace, and continue to seek those who are lost, so that all may rejoice in your presence, you who live and reign forever and ever.